

26400 Lahser Road, Suite 100
Southfield, Michigan 48034
Tel: (248) 355-3300
Fax: (248) 355-9951
Website: www.ncjwgds.org



National Council of Jewish Women
Greater Detroit Section

MICHIGAN STATE HOUSE
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
March 22, 2005
Re: HB 4433 and HR 24

My name is Fern Ettinger, and I am here this morning to speak on behalf of National Council of Jewish Women. We are a volunteer organization inspired by Jewish values that works through programs of research, education, advocacy and community service to improve the quality of life for women, children and families and strives to ensure individual rights and freedoms for all.

I am speaking in opposition to HB 4433 and HR 24.

A law to encourage local units of government to post the Ten Commandments in government-owned buildings violates the First Amendment.

The State should not use its powers to promote the sacred texts of any religion. While our government supports and protects each individual's right to prefer one religion over another, the current bill, HB 4433, fails to recognize the vast diversity of people living in the state of Michigan. By posting sacred texts of any religion in government-owned buildings, the government sends a message to followers of different religions, or those who believe in no religion at all, that they are outsiders.

In spite of claims of historical significance, the Ten Commandments are a sacred, not secular, text. The Ten Commandments is an important religious code to many, but it is not the basis of U.S. law. Many of the commandments address religious and moral decrees, not legal mandates.

If Michigan legislators are eager to post something that deals with the foundation of American law, you need look no further than the U.S. Constitution. When legislators take the oath of office, they pledge to uphold the Constitution. Please fulfill this pledge by vetoing HB 4433 and any similar bills.

Thank you.
Fern Ettinger
National Council of Jewish Women
State Public Affairs, Chair
(248) 355-3300